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0 HISTORICAL SKETCH

OF THE

Protestant Episcopal Church

IN THE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

1784—1884.

BY THE

RT. REV. WILLIAM STEVENS PERRY, D.D., LL.D.,

BISHOP OF IOWA.

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The Author.

HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE PROT-
ESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH
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THE close of the struggle for national independence brought to the churchmen who had sympathized with the principles of the Revolution problems of grave interest. Prior to the war the centre of unity for the clergy and laity of the Church of England in America had been the recognition of the Bishop of London as the Diocesan of the one, and the use by minister and people alike of the same formularies of devotion and the acknowledgment of the same symbols of belief. The Prayer-book remained, indeed, when the war broke out, but its use was practically interdicted. The presence of the state prayers rendered it unacceptable to those who sympathized with the revolt, while the "loyalists," rather than omit these supplications from the accustomed forms, preferred the closing of their churches and the cessation of all public prayers. But the allegiance due to the See of London was wholly destroyed. The clergy could no longer depend upon the license of a foreign Bishop for induction to American parishes. The laity no longer

regarded a foreign prelate as empowered to administer discipline and exercise oversight in the case of their wayward priests, or give the valid commission to their aspirants for orders. The Church had felt in every quarter the effects of the war. In the interruption of services, the removal of the clergy, the suspension of the grants from the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel and the Crown, and the odium attaching in the revolted States to everything derived from and dependent upon the hated motherland, the Church sunk to the lowest depths of depression, and in certain quarters seemed well-nigh extinct. The leading clergymen at the North had warmly espoused the cause of the King, and although in the Middle States and at the South the clergy were in general in sympathy with the popular side, still in the minds of the multitude, both in the North and South, the Church was regarded as closely connected with the tyranny from which, at a great cost of blood and treasure, the land had been freed. Even the church buildings were in many cases despoiled and destroyed, and the end of the struggle found the Church existing only in a few of the centres of population, or else where the piety and popularity of patriot clergymen had enabled its adherents to weather the storm of prejudice and ignorant hate. There had been attempts to secure the Episcopate, and earnest prayers for this coveted completion of the order and government of the Church in the colonies, dating back for upward of a century. But still the close of the war found no bishop in America, and but few clergymen scattered through-

out the independent States. Even where the Church had been established, it had suffered depletion in numbers and the spoiling of its goods and glebes. In Virginia, where prior to the Revolutionary struggle there were upward of one hundred and sixty churches and chapels, with nearly a hundred clergymen ministering at their altars, the close of the contest found ninety-five parishes extinct, and of the remainder nearly one half were without ministrations. Less than thirty clergymen remained at their posts when the war had ceased. Many of the churches had been closed or converted to other uses, or else destroyed. The sacramental vessels even had been, in many cases, taken by sacrilegious hands and devoted to unholy purposes. Here, as elsewhere, the Church was well-nigh extinct.

But the gates of hell had not wholly prevailed against the Church of Christ. There were those, both of the clergy and laity, who were alive to the necessity of organization and the creation of a fresh bond of unity. In 1783, ten clergymen met at Woodbury, Conn., and on the feast of the Annunciation chose, rather than elected, the excellent Samuel Seabury, D.D., *Oxon.*, to go first to England, and then, if need be, to Scotland, to secure the coveted Episcopate, without which the New England churchmen felt that all efforts for the organization of the Church would be futile. In Maryland, under the leadership of the able and celebrated William Smith, D.D., *Oxon.*, the first president of the College and Academy of Philadelphia, and one of the foremost of the American

clergy, measures looking toward organization were taken by the clergy, first at a gathering of a number of their order at the Commencement of Washington College, of which Dr. Smith was president and later in the autumn, at a formal meeting, at which a "Declaration of Rights" was formulated, and measures taken for the perpetuation of the Church and the preservation of its civil and ecclesiastical privileges. The following year, the centennial of which we enter upon in 1884, the Church in Pennsylvania, under the leadership of the apostolic White, completed its organization on the plan which has subsequently become universal in the American Church, by the admission of the laity to its ecclesiastical councils, and by its recognition of their presence and co-ordinate power in its deliberations and legislation. In Virginia, where, at the opening of the war, the Legislature had taken in hand the revision of the Prayers, so far as directing the omission of the State supplications was concerned, the clergy met in council and took measures, which were subsequently adopted at the southward, for the preservation of the Church temporalities and the prevention of any undue assumption of power on the part of the bishops, whose coming they felt could now be no longer prevented. In South Carolina, where the country had been ravaged by the British troops again and again during the war, and where the popular mind was specially antagonistic to anything savoring of England, whether in State or Church, the preliminary convention, while recognizing the existence and need

of the three orders in the ministry, carefully stipulated that no bishop should be settled in the State for the present.

It was under circumstances such as these that a suggestion made by Dr. Abraham Beach, of New Brunswick, in a letter to the Rev. Dr. White, of Philadelphia, and at a later date in one addressed to the Rev. Samuel Provoost, the patriot-rector of Trinity, New York, resulted in a gathering of clergy and laity at New Brunswick, on the 11th of May, 1784, with a view of consultation respecting the state and prospects of the Church. It was in connection with a meeting of the "Corporation for the Relief of Widows and Orphans of Clergymen of the Church of England," in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York, that this primary and informal convention was held. Laymen were present as well as clergymen, and a Committee of Correspondence was appointed, "for the purpose of forming a continental representation of the Episcopal Church, and for the better management of other concerns" of the same. A committee was requested "to wait upon the clergy of Connecticut," at their convocation in the ensuing "Trinity week," for the purpose of "soliciting their concurrence in such measures as may be deemed conducive to the union and prosperity of the Episcopal churches in the States of America." The records of this meeting for consultation of a few friends of the Church are still extant. A single sheet of foolscap, faded and yellow with age, and bearing in lieu of other attestation the indorsement of the venerable William White,

D.D., to the effect that it is "The original of the minutes of the Meeting in N. Brunswick in May, 1784," and adding the interesting fact that it was "in the handwriting of the Rev. Benjamin (since Bishop) Moore, of New York," contains the scanty minutes of this gathering, out of which grew the General Convention of the American Church.

On the Tuesday after the feast of St. Michael next ensuing, October 6th, 1784, there met, agreeably to the recommendation of the New Brunswick meeting, "a Convention of Clergymen and Lay Deputies of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America," in the city of New York. Of the New England States, Massachusetts and Rhode Island, and Connecticut were represented by a single clerical delegate respectively. Six clergymen and three laymen were in attendance from New York; New Jersey sent a single clergyman, with three laymen; Pennsylvania was represented by three clergymen and four laymen; Delaware by two clergymen and a single layman; Maryland by the celebrated Dr. William Smith; while a footnote to the "broadside" proceedings tells us "that the Rev. Mr. Griffith, from the State of Virginia, was present by permission; the clergy of that State, being restricted by laws yet in force," not being "at liberty to send delegates, or consent to any alteration in the order, government, doctrine, or worship of the Church." Fifteen clergymen and eleven of the laity made up a body whose deliberations, so far as indicated by their results, command our profound respect, and whose

far-seeing policy has commended itself, and the "fundamental principles" on which that policy was formulated, to the approval of all subsequent time. These principles, which were intended to underlie the general ecclesiastical constitution of the Church in the United States, provided for the meeting "of the Episcopal Church" in "a General Convention;" for the representation of "the Episcopal Church in each State," by deputies "consisting of clergy and laity;" that the "Church shall maintain the doctrine of the Gospel as now held by the Church of England; and shall adhere to the Liturgy of the said Church as far as shall be consistent with the American Revolution and the Constitutions of the respective States;" that a "bishop; duly consecrated and settled," shall be "a member of the convention *ex-officio*;" that the clergy and laity in convention shall deliberate together, but vote separately; that the concurrence of both orders shall be necessary for the validity of a vote; and that the first meeting assemble in Philadelphia on the Tuesday before the Feast of St. Michael, 1785." Such are the recorded proceedings, as given to the world at the time, of one of the most important ecclesiastical gatherings on record. The recognition by this preliminary convention of the importance and right of lay representation in the councils of the Church was perhaps the most important "principle" of those enunciated as "fundamental" to the organization of the American Church. From other sources than the "broadside" account of this meeting, we learn that though the

Church in Connecticut, as well as the churches in Massachusetts and Rhode Island, were represented in this October meeting in New York, the New England churchmen, were disposed to defer the organization of the Church until the completion of the negotiations then pending for the consecration of the Rev. Dr. Seabury, the Bishop-elect of Connecticut, and the presence of one in Episcopal orders in the land. This happy result was shortly accomplished. On the 14th of November, 1784, in an "upper room" in Aberdeen, the first Bishop of Connecticut received consecration at the hands of the Bishops of the Church in Scotland, and early the following year was enthusiastically welcomed to his see. In the measures for organization subsequent to the arrival of Bishop Seabury, the New England churchmen kept aloof, till in 1789 a union was happily effected between the Church at the North and the churches in the Middle and Southern States. This preliminary meeting in New York took measures for the preparation of "a proper substitute for the State Prayers in the Liturgy," and in view of the widespread lack of clerical ministrations, made provision for the examination and accrediting of suitable lay readers in the vacant parishes. It was in a spirit of practical good sense as well as thorough loyalty to the Church of their baptism and love, that the members of this convention addressed themselves to their task of a Church's organization. Their faith and zeal received an abundant reward in a revived and reunited Church.

In September and October, 1785, there assem-

bled in Philadelphia the first gathering of clergy and laity that might properly be regarded as a general convention. The Church in seven States was represented by sixteen clergymen and twenty-six laymen. The New England churches were not represented. The work of organization and the revision of the Prayer-book were at once undertaken. In fact, the conservative provision of the "fundamental principle," adopted at the preliminary meeting in New York, was lost sight of, and in place of the revision of the liturgy, with a view to provide simply for the alterations required by a change in the civil relations of the Church, it was decided to make "further alterations," the result of which appeared soon after the convention rose, in the "Proposed Book." A plan for obtaining from the English archbishops and bishops the consecration of bishops was adopted, as was also a draft of an ecclesiastical constitution. The liturgical alterations *proposed*, for they were never *adopted* by the American Church, contemplated the omission from the Apostles' Creed of the article, "he descended into Hell," and the rejection of the Nicene and Athanasian symbols. The Articles of Religion were reduced to twenty. A preface, chiefly the work of the celebrated Dr. William Smith, was prefixed to the proposed Prayer-Book. The offices were abbreviated. A calendar and table of holy days were set forth, a service for the Fourth of July was appointed, and numerous verbal changes were introduced. But the "Proposed Book" proved unsatisfactory, and even its tentative

use was confined to a few. The volume almost immediately sunk into obscurity, and it is said that the bulk of the edition was condemned to the use of the trunk makers.

In June, 1786, the convention assembled in Philadelphia, "under circumstances," to quote the language of Bishop White, "which bore strong appearances of a dissolution of the union." The answer of the English archbishops and bishops to the application for the consecration of American bishops had been cautious, and revealed an apprehension on the part of the prelates of the Mother Church that the American churchmen were verging toward unsoundness in the faith. A jealousy of the Bishop of Connecticut had grown up in the minds of some, and a spirit of unfriendliness toward the churches and churchmen at the North was apparent by the attempted, as well as the accomplished, action of the convention. But a conservative spirit in other respects was shown in some important changes made in the ecclesiastical constitution, and the convention was not a little influenced by the wise counsels of a memorial from the convention of the Church in New Jersey, which had been prepared by the celebrated Dr. Thomas Bradbury Chandler. The convention adjourned, to meet in October, after renewed assurances had been made that there was no purpose of departing from the English Church in doctrine, discipline, or worship, further than the circumstances of the changed civil relations of the Church rendered imperative. At the autumnal meeting, which was

held at Wilmington, in Delaware, the reply of the English archbishops and bishops was received, and brought with it the assurance that the wish of the American Church for the succession in the English line wanted but a little of full accomplishment. At the instance of the English prelates the omitted article in the Apostles' Creed was restored, the representatives of New Jersey and South Carolina voting in the affirmative, and those of New York, Pennsylvania, and Delaware being divided. The Nicene Creed was unanimously restored. The Athanasian Creed was again rejected, but one clergyman and two laymen voting in its favor. Testimonials of Drs. White and Provoost, the bishops-elect of Pennsylvania and New York, were signed, and the application of the Rev. Dr. William Smith, the bishop-elect of Maryland, for a similar recommendation was refused. Shortly after the convention rose, the bishops-elect sailed for England, and on Sunday, the 4th of February, 1787, received the Episcopate at Lambeth Chapel, at the hands of the two archbishops, and the bishops of Bath and Wells, and Peterborough.

In 1789 the convention met on the 28th of July, in Philadelphia. An application from the clergy of Massachusetts and New Hampshire, inspired by the amiable and excellent Parker, subsequently Bishop of Massachusetts, asking for the consecration of Dr. Bass to the Episcopate by the three bishops now in the country, led to the adoption of measures of union between the churches of the North under Seabury and those in the Middle and

Southern States. The validity of the consecration of Seabury was formally acknowledged, and although the consecration of a third bishop in the English line was subsequently accomplished, still at an adjourned session, which met on the 29th of September and continued in session until the 16th of October, 1789, the Church was happily united, and there being three bishops, agreeably to the Ecclesiastical Constitution, the House of Bishops was organized, Bishop Seabury being the first presiding bishop. The adoption of a Prayer-book followed, with few variations from the English service-book, and psalms in metre with hymns were set forth. Eight canons were enacted and certain modifications of the constitution secured. Thus happily the union of the churches, so long at variance, was effected, and from the year 1789 dates both the present Prayer-book and the General Convention of the Church. Dr. Madison had been consecrated at Lambeth on the 19th of September, 1790, and on the 17th of September, 1792, the first American consecration, that of Dr. Thomas John Claggett, of Maryland, took place, Bishop Provoost being the consecrator, assisted by bishops Seabury, White, and Madison. At the convention in New York, at which this solemn ceremonial took place, the ordinal was revised and set forth, and measures were inaugurated for providing "missionaries to preach the gospel on the frontiers of the United States." The consideration of the Articles was postponed, and a scheme for the comprehension of the Methodist body was debated. This plan of

union, which was specially favored by Bishop Madison, but which, though countenanced by the bishops, failed of the approval of the House of Deputies, produced no results.

Owing to the presence of epidemic disease in Philadelphia, the convention of 1795 was but thinly attended, and from this cause no convention assembled in 1798. The following year, in July, a convention was held in Philadelphia, the Church in eight States being represented by nineteen clerical and ten lay deputies. A form of consecration of a church or chapel was set forth at this session, and seventeen articles were reported, though not adopted. The Church was thus, at the close of the century, organized and ready for growth and development.

It was to be expected that the period of organization should be succeeded by a time of depression and retrogression. The death, one by one, of the older clergy, who had to a large extent come from England, found few prepared to take up the ministerial work. The lesson of self-sustentation was to be learned now that the stipends freely dispensed by the venerable society were withdrawn. Besides, an *anglophobia*, and a wide-spread adoption of the manners and disbelief of the French, reduced religion to a low ebb, and made the Church, though no longer by name or dependence of *England*, yet distrusted and disliked. The historian of the Church in Virginia speaks of the "gloomy darkness" which prevailed at this period of the Church's history, and notices the general absence of spiritual life and zeal. By a strange Providence the act of

the Virginia Assembly confiscating the glebes and other Church property, which had been resisted in the courts in consequence of its manifest illegality, became of force, by the death of the Presiding Judge of the Appellate Court the very night before he would have promulged the decision, already prepared and written out, by which the Church's rights would have been affirmed. The result of this decision was disastrous. There seemed little hope that the Church would ever rise to life again. The episcopate of Madison, whose labors had all along been hindered by his obligations to the College of William and Mary, of which he was the head, closed under circumstances that seemed to render it doubtful if there would be an attempt even to elect a successor. In Maryland and Delaware the spiritual condition was much the same as in Virginia. The application of New Jersey for the consecration of Dr. Uzal Ogden as the first bishop of this see, was refused by the General Convention of 1801, and the unsuccessful aspirant for the episcopate took refuge among the Presbyterians, with whom he had long been in sympathy. In New York Dr. Provoost had voluntarily terminated his episcopate by resignation, and although the House of Bishops refused to regard this act as final, the Bishop retired from the exercise of his function, and the full administration of the diocese was intrusted by the State Convention to the Rt. Rev. Dr. Benjamin Moore. At the southward the Church made little progress, and in some sections seemed to decrease. In New England there was perhaps a

healthier condition, but it was still "the day of small things," so far as the increase or influence of the Church was concerned. In 1808 but two bishops were present at the General Convention in Baltimore. Three years later the number was the same, and the consecration of the two bishops-elect, to whom under God much of the Church's revival was to be due, Hobart and Griswold, was prevented till, after the convention arose, the presence and participation in this rite of the retired Provoost could be had to make up the Episcopal College. Even then the report of the Committee on the State of the Church showed that in Maryland the Church was "still in a deplorable condition," while in Virginia there was "danger of her total ruin." But already there were tokens that God had not deserted the Church of His planting. In 1814, the Rev. Richard Channing Moore, D.D., was elected to the Bishopric of Virginia, and although this initial act of a reviving Church was affected under God by a convention numbering but seven clergymen and less than a score of the laity, the coming of Bishop Moore to his see was almost immediately followed by the outpouring of the Spirit of God, quickening to a new life the dry bones on every side. It was to no enviable position that the saintly Channing Moore was called. "Deplorable" indeed was the condition of the Church over which he had been made an overseer. "In many places her ministers" had "thrown off their sacred profession;" her liturgy "was either contemned or unknown;" "her sanctuaries were

desolate," and "spacious temples, venerable even in their dilapidation and ruins," were "now the habitations of the wild beasts of the forests." In Maryland the Church continued, even so late as 1814, "in a state of depression," while in Delaware the condition was represented as "truly distressing and the prospect gloomy."

The Episcopate of John Henry Hobart in New York marked a new era of development and growth. Bold and unflinching in the avowal and defence of his Church principles, he stamped the impress of a resolute and vigorous mind upon the Church, in whose behalf he lived and died. In New England the amiable and apostolic Griswold, though less pronounced in his advocacy of distinctively Church views, was almost equally successful in winning men of various beliefs and professions to the Church which his saintliness adorned and his devotion to his arduous work fostered through a long and honored episcopate.

Among the evidences of a revival of life and zeal were the measures dating back their beginning to 1814, and resulting in the establishment, first in New Haven and then in New York, of "The General Theological Seminary of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States." The arrangements for the founding and subsequent transfer of this school of theology from its first home in Connecticut to New York, where both landed property and endowments were provided, occupied the greater part of the session of the General Convention of 1820, and occasioned the assembling of a Special

Convention in 1821, to enable the institution to secure the Sherred legacy. At the same time these efforts for the supply of an educated clergy were being made, the Church awoke to a sense of her duty to the heathen abroad as well as the heathen at our doors, and at the General Convention of 1821 the constitution of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Church was perfected. It was recommended by this convention "to every member of this society, to pray to Almighty God for His blessing upon its designs, under the full conviction that unless He direct us in all our doings with His most gracious favor, and further us with His continued help, we cannot reasonably hope either to procure suitable persons to act as missionaries, or expect that their endeavors will be successful." Work entered into in such a spirit could not fail of a measure of success, and from this time the advance of the Church has been marked and uniform.

In 1826 Bishop Hobart proposed, with a view of securing uniformity in the use of what is known as the ante-communion service, a slight abbreviation of portions of the daily prayers, and also the adoption of alternate forms in the office of confirmation. Though not adopted—it is doubtful if they were ever intended by the mover to be adopted—the result of the discussion was the declaration of both Houses of the General Convention in favor of the use of the ante-communion office "on all Sundays and other holy days." The Church was now rapidly increasing, and in the States west of the Alleghanies the faithful labors of missionaries and evangelists

resulted in the formation of dioceses, the establishment of Church institutions, and the increase in the number of parishes and congregations. In Ohio, Bishop Philander Chase founded Kenyon College and the theological seminary at Gambier, receiving in the prosecution of his efforts both sympathy and material aid from England. Circumstances arising that led the bishop to resign his see, in a new field, he established a second institution of learning and became the first Bishop of Illinois. In 1835, the epoch of the great development of the missionary spirit in the Church, the apostolic Jackson Kemper was sent forth to his missionary episcopate, comprising the "North-West," and offering to this single-hearted laborer an empire to conquer for Christ and His Church. It was at this time that the constitution of the Church's missionary organization was adopted declaring every baptized member of the Church a member of this organization.

On the 17th of July, 1836, the venerable William White, in the fiftieth year of his episcopate, "fell asleep." His half century of episcopal labor covers the first fifty years of our Church's history as an independent branch of the Church of Christ. The episcopate of the present venerable Presiding Bishop, Benjamin Bosworth Smith, consecrated by White and excelling him in the length of time he has exercised his office, covers the remainder of the century of Church life and being which is now complete.

The story of these last fifty years can be briefly told. The successful labors of Kemper in the great

North-West encouraged the commital in 1838 of the South-West to Dr. Leonidas Polk. Later, in 1844, this work was assigned to Dr. Freeman, and Horatio Southgate was consecrated as Missionary Bishop to Constantinople, and William J. Boone for China.

The "Oxford movement" occupied no little attention at the convention when these and other measures for the extension of the Church at home and abroad were taken. But after much discussion the Lower house put on record its statement that "the Liturgy, Offices, and Articles of the Church" were "sufficient exponents" of "the essential doctrines of Holy Scripture, while the Canons of the Church afforded ample means of discipline and correction for all who depart from her standards," adding that the Church was not "responsible for the errors of individuals." The House of Bishops gave expression to their views of the matter in debate in the pastoral issued at the close of the convention. The resignation and suspension of the Bishop of Pennsylvania and the trial and condemnation of the Bishop of New York made this period of our Church's history memorable, and the discussions and dissensions growing out of these troubles, by which the Church, like her Lord, was wounded in the house of her friends, left their trace upon the Church's history for years. In 1859 the legislation of the Church was codified, and the "Digest of the Canons" was set forth. The excitement of the Civil War followed, involving a temporary suspension of the friendly relations existing between the

Northern and Southern dioceses. But with the return of peace there came a glad return to unity, and since the Church was reunited its advance has been more rapid than before. Its missions at home and abroad have been multiplied. Its literary institutions have taken root and grown on every side. Its dioceses have increased by the creation of new sees and the division of the older and larger ones. Its charities have reached a magnitude and importance claiming and receiving the praise of all philanthropists, and the Church enters upon its second century with a vigor and a promise excelled by none. Its future bids fair to be as its past, only more abounding in influences for good. It already begins to give proof of its adaptation to all classes and conditions of men. It will, with God's blessing, be indeed "the Church of the future."

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